

# **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING of**

## **THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**held via Lifesize  
on 11 February 2022 at 3.10pm**

### **PRESENT**

Willie Munro (Chair)

Douglas McAdam (Vice-Chair)

Peter Argyle

Janet Hunter

Xander McDade until 4.40pm

Willie McKenna

### **In Attendance:**

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services

Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development

Stephen Corcoran, Peatland ACTION Programme Manager

Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Place

Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change

David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons Programme

Helen Mason, Minute-Taker

### **Apologies:**

Vicky Walker, Governance and Reporting Manager

Anne Rae Macdonald

### **Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of Performance Committee. He informed the Committee that the meeting was being recorded and would be available on the website.

### **Declaration of Interests - None**

2. Doug McAdam declared a Non-Financial interest in:
  - a) Paper 1 - HH project - Independent Chair of the South Grampian Deer Management Group.
  - b) Paper 8 - sits on the Capercaillie Board as CNPA Board Representative

### **Minutes of Last Meetings held – for approval**

3. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were agreed.

### **Matters Arising**

4. **Action points arising from previous meeting:**

- a) **At Para 6) Closed** – Performance Dashboard tool as a standard tool to be discussed at the next meeting. On today’s Agenda as Paper 5.
- b) **At Para 12i) Closed** - Head of Conservation to discuss Communications Plan with Doug McAdam.
- c) **At Para 12ii) Closed** - Head of Conservation to share Environmental Impact Assessment on this with Willie McKenna to help inform them of the implications of the project.
- d) **At Para 29i) Closed** - Director of Planning and Place passed on Committee thanks to Liz Henderson for all the work she had done on the Badenoch Great Place project.
- e) **At Para 34i) In Hand**– Staff to get contractors in place as soon as possible.
- f) **At Para 41i) In Hand** CEO to look again at the HH Advisory Panel membership – Grant followed up – in place for next meeting
- g) **At Para 41ii) In Hand** – Any changes to the HH Advisory Panel to be taken forward after their first meeting.
- h) **At Para 48i) In Hand** - CEO to look into better communication with Board and wider community.

### **Heritage Horizons Project Update (Paper 1)**

- 5. David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons Programme, introduced the paper which updated the Committee on delivery of the Heritage Horizons (HH) Cairngorms 2030 Programme and the planned development work to end April 2022. The next meeting with the NLHF (National Heritage Lottery Fund) will be the end of April as will be the next Programme Board Meeting.
- 6. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
  - a) Members noted the comprehensive report and good achievement especially in the time scale.
  - b) Chair asked if internal appointments causing a pressure elsewhere. CEO explained that 3 out of 10 are internal which does cause a backfill issue but there are often changes in staffing to be managed anyway. This was a temporary situation.
  - c) Discussion of the page for Heritage Horizons on the website as it was not easy to find. Head of Heritage Horizons Programme reported that he had a meeting next week to discuss communication including the website. CEO confirmed there was more happening regarding the engagement strategy more widely, and discussion was in hand about this kind of issue.
  - d) A member asked for clarity on the deer section: had West Grampian Deer Management Group been dropped? CEO advised that for the development stage this group was not within HH initial project. But they have similar processes and will come together and should be compatible and tie in with the HH delivery phase.
- 7. **The Chair thanked staff involved for the update.**
- 8. **The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper.**

9. **Action Points Arising:**
- i. **Heritage Horizons project continuing to discuss and amend communications systems online and offline.**

### **Cairngorms Peatland Action Programme Delivery (Paper 2)**

10. Stephen Corcoran, Peatland ACTION Programme Manager, introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery update for the Cairngorms Peatland ACTION Programme. Noted the following
- Staff resources were stretched in seeking to secure project delivery.
  - Estates are becoming involved. Tulchan and Atholl Estates in particular.
  - Contractor capacity an issue so re-profiling expenditure - doing cheaper ditch blocking work – less complex work to start with.
  - There was an Internal audit reviewing the processes and controls at present.
  - Mapping project nearly finished which will be helpful to identify priorities.
11. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) It was confirmed that £400,000 had to go back to Scottish Government, reducing capital budget from £1.7m to £1.3m on the basis of the team's assessment of potential delivery and likely financial outturn position for the current year. The reduced level of expenditure reflected an initial shortage of contractors and redesign of works to more straightforward, less expensive works.
  - b) A member asked about the use of Sheep Wool. Officers reported a trial on Marr Lodge estate: in its early days and this would be looked into further over the coming year.
  - c) Discussed when we are selecting Estates are we looking at their carbon footprint? It was confirmed that this was not being looked at nor was it by Peatland Action across Scotland. Director of Nature and Climate Change explained Internal Audit was currently looking at what criteria we are using to select Estates.
  - d) Noted Atholl Estate video was very helpful particularly at showing peat 'zipping' restoration.
  - e) Discussed the lack of resources; people and contractors - how can this be tackled? It was reported that the Internal Audit review was helping support management's review of workloads, objectives, and team capacity; while funding had been secured to recruit another member of staff which would help to scale up delivery especially for more complicated erosion work. CEO responded that one of the key issues was contractor capacity and Estates' interest. In the next few weeks paper showing peatland degradation across the NP and Scotland. Through discussion with NatureScot there was now a National Peatland Board. Money was not the issue but the people and contractors to do the work. NatureScot just coming to the end of a review which includes some potential funding.
  - f) Director of Corporate Services advised that the returned funding this year had been allocated to our projected expenditure profiles over the next years. He hopes to 'reprofile' this money from Scottish Govt to next year rather than give

- it back. Noted we are working on a five-year programme. He expected to be more knowledgeable about the funding when we come to the budget in March.
- g) Peatland ACTION Programme Manager added we have a great many potential projects but might not get the contractors. We will however exceed our targets for hectares of peatland restored in the year. Director of Corporate Services advised that the internal audit looking at this and looking at resources. Maximise delivery against the programme.
  - h) Member spoke about the Just Transition Fund: £500m over 10 years split over three local authorities. Paul Macari (Head of Planning, Aberdeenshire Council) is leading on this in Aberdeenshire Council. CEO will drop him a line about this regarding future years.

12. **The Chair thanked Peatland ACTION Programme Manager for his work and summarised the points below:**

13. **The Performance Committee noted the delivery update and considered:**

- a) **the project risks and mitigation;**
- b) **the scope and scale of the Peatland Programme and the resource implications for the Authority;**
- c) **whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.**

14. **Action Points arising:**

- i. **CEO to talk to Paul Macari Head of Planning Aberdeenshire.**
- ii. **Director of Corporate Services working on resources and budget.**
- iii. **Use of Wool by the Marr Lodge Estate – look at it over the coming year.**

### **Cairngorms LEADER and Cairngorms Trust Delivery (Paper 3)**

15. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms LEADER Programme and voluntary and charitable giving activities as managed by the Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Group Trust (Cairngorms Trust). He highlighted the following points:
- a) We didn't manage to get the supply of the electric minibus under TICK project prior to closure of LEADER programme.
  - b) What might come to replace LEADER: positive work underway through a number of Scottish Government led working groups which appear to confirm the recognised importance of some form of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) at central government level.
  - c) Testing Change fund – youth local action group, funding projects for young people now underway.
  - d) Green Change fund: CLLD initiative to test approach to community led action on climate and environment.
  - e) Slow Progress regarding any funding from the UK Government Levelling up Fund.

- f) Work from the Cairngorm Trust on voluntary giving scheme was being invigorated this year after Covid. Noted Cairngorms Trust Annual Accounts for Year Ending March 2021
16. The Performance Committee discussed the delivery updates and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Discussion about Visitor Giving Fundraising: has there been any progress by the Cairngorms Trust? Director of Corporate Services advised some match funding to Trust is under consideration to support the development of the voluntary giving scheme, to enable Trust to build its operations to a point where the scheme gives a nett positive contribution and can more significantly support footpath maintenance and conservation projects. As reported earlier, he confirmed there will be work to re-invigorate the development and roll-out of the voluntary giving scheme in year ahead, following previous Covid restrictions preventing this work moving forward.
  - b) Statement made that the Voluntary Giving Scheme was set up originally to pay for the maintenance of the NP. Director of Corporate Services explained that the objectives were to fund infrastructure maintenance and conservation. The scheme began just before Covid, and the resources had not been as much as had hoped given the curtailment of activity during the pandemic. Some funds gone into path maintenance via community projects. Work to do to secure sufficient funds to make this a worthwhile long-term process. Was it worth getting people getting out there to look at what needs doing? An audit of path networks? Yes, this was the overall ethos, Access teams were looking at this. CEO reported about the potential of VisitScotland support with funding details expected in June this year. He advised that this report would come before the Performance Committee as a specific agenda item.
  - c) Discussion on UK Government Levelling Up Fund discussed an understanding that there may be some fixed level of funding per UK parliamentary constituency. Director of Corporate Services clarified; we won't have a specific amount allocated to us as a National Park area or Authority. We will be at the end of a consultation on use of funds to be allocated, or not in the conversation on deployment of levelling up funds at all. Scottish Government's CLLD approach was from domestic funds relating to Community Lead Development following on from LEADER which was a positive movement on this area of activity.
  - d) Discussion around Green Funding & Community benefit share – was this potential funding. CEO advised that it would be funding from the carbon credits secured in part from funding used within the National Park. Director of Nature & Climate Change noted that through HH, Green Investment was being looked at.
  - e) Chair commented on the Cairngorms Trust report there were impressive numbers also around living wage, while noting it appeared that some jobs had been created below this wage level. The Chair asked if the living wage level should be a requirement? Director of Corporate Services agreed that they would have to look at this aspect of the report, as he understood the Living Wage was a basic requirement of jobs created under the programme. He added that there would be some subcontracting in the Leader projects where we would not have control of wages and this may be reflected here. He advised he would look into it get back to the Committee on this.

17. **The Chair concluded that though not all targets were met it had proved impressive outcomes for monitoring of this funding.**
18. **The Performance Committee reviewed the delivery updates presented in the paper and considered:**
  - a) **whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Cairngorms NPA's agreed strategic outcomes;**
  - b) **whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's agreed performance objectives;**
  - c) **whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.**
19. **Action Points Arising:**
  - i. **Audit of Footpath Maintenance to come back to committee at some point.**
  - ii. **Report to come to Performance Committee relating to Visit Scotland Funding.**
  - iii. **Look at Green Funding particularly via Heritage Horizons.**
  - iv. **Director of Corporate Services to look further into the living wage a requirement for the future and bring back to Committee.**

#### **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (Paper 4)**

20. Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms Capercaillie project. He highlighted the following areas:
  - a) Carrbridge Capercaillie Group would be submitting a revised programme soon.
  - b) "Red" action highlighted in report on habitat improvement plans around Glenmore. Re-advertised via habitats restoration project – Habitat Grant Scheme, already had some interest. It was expected this project element would make up lost ground.
  - c) DNA analysis of Capercaillie feathers – work will be done but there are time delays. Not directly affecting local Capercaillie project which will be done within schedule of project.
  - d) Budget on track regarding delegated fund and managing effective financial management relationships with NHLF as some underspend but likely to be transferred to habitat restoration.
  - e) Work in Deeside underway.
  - f) Research results from Glenmore/Abernethy corridor, visitors will go where they are directed. Residents want to go where they want to go usually quiet areas away from visitors. Residents are a target group.
  - g) NatureScot advisory committee subgroup. Report due 24<sup>th</sup> February. Implication for Capercaillie conservation in wider context.
  - h) Risks Identified:
    - i. Carrbridge Group: tighter oversight and support to help Group control progress.

- ii. Deeside, Scope of project: disturbance issues & how it links to work in the wider area.
21. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Concern about amount of woodland damage caused by recent storms and potential damage to Capercaillie habitat.
  - b) Problems clearing trees, danger to oblivious residents walking, such as climbing over trees while being cut. In many areas working with local communities had worked well. It's the way we work with them which was critical for success.
  - c) Discussed possibility of transferring money from Caper to fixing the paths so people don't damage the Capercaillie habitat. It was noted this was tried in Carrbridge without success but there might be opportunities elsewhere. Director of Nature & Climate Change explained the Carrbridge position regarding path improvements. Path improvements to be arranged by Community Council will not come from project money.
  - d) Member noted the amount of interest from Deeside and that the number of Capercaillie was one of the KPI and not much could be done at this stage. Director of Nature & Climate Change advised that the 5-year survey transects will be what will count.
  - e) Discussion about Carrbridge community and the Park Authority, could it be confirmed that the communication had been satisfactorily resolved? CEO advised that the Park Authority has tried to resolve this however there was continuing correspondence. Comprehensive information about the Capercaillie Project on website, but some people don't agree with what was happening, so it was proving difficult to resolve. Some parts are going extremely well. Chair noted the potential issue around reputation but not of the project in delivering its agreed outcomes. He added that the Capercaillie Project has got a lot of good actions in their plan going forward. Director of Nature & Climate Change to make sure on the written report there was included a reputational risk relating to the Carrbridge project.
22. **The Chair concluded that though there are some areas of concern the project was working well and that we would not want to lose sight of the original Project objectives which were generally being delivered.**
23. **The Performance Committee reviewed delivery updates and considered:**
- a) **progress towards the project's agreed purposes;**
  - b) **any strategically significant impacts on delivery of the CNPA's Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan;**
  - c) **any material impacts on the CNPA's strategic risk management.**
24. **Action Point Arising:**
- i. **Director of Nature & Climate Change to make sure on the written report there would be coverage included of reputational risk assessment relating to the Carrbridge project.**

## **Performance Dashboard (Paper 5)**

25. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the paper about the evolution of some form of 'dashboard' for the Committee. Audit and Risk Committee Meeting - since paper written - suggested a more standardised approach to the Performance Committee reporting looking at key outcomes. This would involve a standardised table of key outcomes and KPIs of each project, with notes of explanation in a cover paper for the Committee. Plus produce an overview sheet. Feedback on best form of presentation to what remains a relatively new committee is requested today.
26. Chair suggested continued discussion (himself, Vice-Chair and Director of Corporate Services), then bring it back to meeting.
27. The Performance Committee agreed with the Chair's suggestion and that the presentation in tables would be good. It would be useful for this to apply to the Committee plus Staff and the whole organisation.
28. **The Chair concluded his suggested meeting would be arranged. Experiment with the new format at the next meeting if appropriate.**
29. The Performance Committee considered the structure and content of reporting to date, in the context of the wider performance framework reporting to the Board and agreed to provide feedback to officers for future evolution of Committee papers to meet the governance needs of its members.
30. **Action Point Arising:**
  - i. **Chair, Vice-Chair and Director of Corporate Services will discuss the reporting of the Performance Committees and then bring it back to the Committee.**

## **AOCB**

31. The Chair explained that the Vice-Chair had raised a query on the minutes of the last meeting Item 41 Heritage Horizons Advisory Panel and asked the CEO to give an update. CEO explained that people had been appointed to cover a wide range of experience; and that they were ready to appoint to cover experience of farming. He added this would be a commercial farmer from within the National Park.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

32. The next meeting of the Performance Committee 13 May 2022 via Lifesize (all Committees to be held on the same day so will remain via Lifesize).
33. The meeting concluded at 16:53 hours.